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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 8921
RUEHBM/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST 0273
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RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 1107
RUEHDL/AMEMBASSY DUBLIN 0026
RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI 0278
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON 0051
RUEHLJ/AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA 0079
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0144
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 0466
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0398
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0758
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0170
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 0259
RUEHRK/AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK 0008
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA 0066
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0099
RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA 0261
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0456
RUEHTL/AMEMBASSY TALLINN 0060
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 2399
RUEHVT/AMEMBASSY VALLETTA 0086
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 0061
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0329
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LUXEMBOURG 000162

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/25/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [LU](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR WAGNER'S MEETING WITH FM ASSELBORN
APRIL 28

REF: A. STATE 55201

[1](#)B. LUXEMBOURG 0152

Classified By: AMB ANN L. WAGNER, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Ambassador Wagner met privately with Foreign Minister Asselborn April 28 to press home the U.S. government's deep concerns about the unhelpful remarks he has made about missile defense. Asselborn defended his comments by stating that he was merely saying "what other people were thinking." The FM said his talks with Russian FM Lavrov suggested that the Russians would seriously consider missile defense negotiations with the U.S. Asselborn requested a meeting with Secretary Rice following his visit to Afghanistan in June. (Note: Embassy is not ready to recommend a meeting with the Secretary at this time. End note.) Despite the USG's and the Government of Luxembourg's own best efforts to rein him in, FM Asselborn will remain the GOL's problem child - as well as a popular politician. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador Wagner told FM Asselborn April 28 that his cumulative remarks has caused a "setback" in Luxembourg-U.S. relations that would take care and time to repair. The Ambassador noted that Russian objections to the missile

defense plan were baseless and illogical, to which Asselborn grudgingly agreed. She strongly encouraged the FM to vent any future concerns about U.S. foreign policy issues directly with her and not in the media and reinforced the fact that words carry great weight and his were not helpful. The FM opined that he was only voicing aloud "what other people were thinking" and that he believed what he was saying ("I must be true to myself"). He did agree to a more "open and direct dialogue" with the Ambassador in the future. He also noted that his Ministry staff had taken a keen interest in his public comments since engaging with Mission staff on the issue of missile defense.

¶3. (C) FM Asselborn said that the missile defense debate "is just beginning" and that the issue is more political than military. He said that NATO was the right forum for missile defense discussions, but added that it should also be discussed by the European Union because it had broad implications for Europe as a whole. The FM said that Russian FM Lavrov had told him that Russia was "not closing the door" to missile defense negotiations and that the Russian government considered missile sites in Western Europe, for example in Italy or the United Kingdom, preferable to Poland and the Czech Republic. Asselborn closed the discussion about Russia by reminding Ambassador Wagner that "I am not the guy who invited Putin to Luxembourg." (Note: Press reports credit Prime Minister Juncker with the invitation; President Putin is scheduled to visit Luxembourg in May. End note.)

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¶4. (C) Asselborn said that he was visiting Afghanistan June 11 and would like to meet with Secretary Rice when he returned to give her a read-out. He proposed the meeting to the Secretary on the margins of the April 26-27 Oslo meeting. He said the Secretary's response was that any meeting would "depend on Ambassador Wagner."

¶5. (C) Comment: Any Mission recommendation for a meeting with the Secretary will depend on Asselborn's future public comments. His promise of an open and direct dialogue in the future acknowledges that he got the message, however he showed no remorse for the harm his remarks caused and we cannot guarantee that he will remain silent on missile defense. He seems unwilling or unable to censor himself, and senior officials at the MFA have had only limited success getting their boss to stick to his talking points. Prime Minister Juncker has publicly clarified Luxembourg's official position (missile defense should be discussed in NATO and in the NATO-Russia Council and Luxembourg recognizes the right of its NATO partners to conclude bilateral agreements), but Asselborn is likely to continue to be the GOL's problem child. We will continue to monitor his public statements very carefully.

¶6. (C) Comment continued: FM Asselborn enjoys solid - and growing - popularity in Luxembourg, further enhancing his position as PM Juncker's key coalition partner. An April 17-23 public opinion poll showed Juncker maintaining his huge popularity among Luxembourgers with an 81 percent approval rating. FM Asselborn, however, got the second highest approval rating, knocking very pro-American Justice Minister Luc Frieden to third place. Although there may be no relationship between Asselborn's enhanced popularity and his comments on missile defense, Embassy believes that a serious public debate in Luxembourg on missile defense could easily solidify opposition to our plans.

WAGNER